



Colton Parish Council

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Clerk: Ms Mandy Lane
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Oxen Park
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Chairman's Annual Report for 2010/2011

Overview

The role of Parish Councils is under scrutiny as never before in the face of the Localism Bill and the Big Society idea. Although we have seen little practical implementation of these concepts as yet, it is gratifying to know that interest in local affairs is such that we considered four applicants for co-option as Councillors - surely unprecedented numbers in recent history. With such high levels of community interest, let us hope that the much-vaunted delegation of some power and influence to local people does really happen.

This has been a year of trying to build on initiatives that have been started in previous years. We also continue to battle with appropriate authorities over basic services and we try to provide some answers of our own. It seems that there will never be a shortage of work for this Parish Council and we hope that we have some true successes in the coming years to justify increased local interest.

Changes to the Council

We were sorry to lose both Penny Lovegrove and John Taylor during the last year. Penny has been a helpful contributor to proceedings with special responsibility for liaison with the lengthsman. John's short but influential tenure was notable for bringing fresh thinking to our deliberations, and for promoting alternative energy issues. In September we were pleased to co-opt Vanessa Champion from Finsthwaite and, in December, David Hoyle from Thwaite Moss. Any new Councillor has a steep learning curve to climb, but I feel that we can every confidence in our latest recruits.

Activities of the Council

Perennial Issues.

It is difficult to believe that our hard-won working relationship with Adam Tyson, our Highway Steward, will be improved upon with the introduction of the Better Highways scheme, but that is what is promised. The winter maintenance programme was handled marginally better than in recent years but has room for improvement. Our Parish Lengthsman, Chris Slater, resigned due to ill health and we thank him for his work. We have recently agreed to advertise for a replacement. Flooding continues to be a problem and we welcome the establishment of the Finsthwaite Flooding Group and will help where we can. The state of our nine Notice boards is generally poor and, with the relatively high cost of repair and replacement, we need to come up with new ways to fund continuation of this legal requirement.

Progress with current projects

During the last year we have continued the development of various initiatives and completed others: the adoption of two BT phone kiosks is complete and their refurbishment is in hand; the necessary repairs to the Bouth Playground are also complete, largely thanks to Cllr Ken Dean and Mr John Osborne; the request to have Bouth Village Green registered as such has been responded to after nearly 4 years of waiting, though, disappointingly, without success due to it being used under lease; we continue to liaise with Highways over the replacement of Bouthrey Bridge and are hopeful that the job will be completed in 2011; our pressure to have something done about the state of our Green Lanes has resulted in the parish becoming the focus of a joint pilot study; and, under John Taylor's leadership, we have held two alternative energy conferences.

New Issues

The Council has dealt with a number of new and interesting developments over the last 12 months. These include: opposing the so-called Forest Sell-off with particular interest in Rigg

Wood; the introduction of car-parking charges at High Dam; off-site camping and caravanning in the Crake Valley; and the problems associated with a certain field of pigs in the south-east of the parish.

Liaison and consultation

The Council has produced three editions of its own newsletter this year, hand-delivered to every member of the community, has contributed to the three local newsletters every month, and has maintained a parish website thanks to the voluntary efforts of the Clerk.

We have continued to be involved with the High Furness Local Area Partnership (LAP), contributing significantly to issues concerning both Highway Stewards and Broadband coverage.

The Council received 26 formal consultations this year, covering topics ranging from the Big Society Community Right to Build proposals, to nuclear reactor designs. It responded to 14 of the consultations which were felt to have particular relevance to Colton Parish.

The Council continues to foster the newly emerging Community Plan, supporting a number of community events in the past year. Thanks are due to Cllr Brenda Fishwick, the Clerk, and the Community Plan Working Group; we look forward to the Plan's successful completion in 2011.

Planning

This year the Council reviewed 26 planning applications. We raised objections to 7 of these and expressed concerns about 2 others; this information can be viewed on the Parish Council website.

Meetings

The Council held nine scheduled meetings during the year and Member attendance averaged 85%, an improvement over previous years. Much of our business this year has been in relation to County Council matters and we are very grateful to Cllr Rod Wilson for his help and support and for actually getting things done in what is only his first full year in office. We are also grateful to District Cllr Colin Davies for his attendance at our meetings. Most meetings have also been attended by our local Police Officer, John Baldwin, and CPSO, Diana Wilcock, although we can also now expect some new faces as the local Police Team structure has been changed.

The dates and venues for meetings for 2011/2012 are available and can be viewed on our website (www.coltonparishcouncil.org.uk), on the notice boards, or hard copies can be obtained from the parish clerk. They are also published in the newsletters. Minutes of meetings can also be obtained from the Clerk or can be accessed via the website.

Budget for the coming year

Our Finance Working Group has continued to oversee our formal budgeting procedures and has recommended a precept which the full Council has approved. In difficult times, it is appropriate that we will see no increase in the precept this year. A summary of accounts is attached.

Chairman's thanks

I would like to thank all my fellow Councillors for their help and much-needed support during the last year and also those residents of the parish who have assisted the Council in its activities. Members have attended meetings, have commented on consultations and have represented the Council on various outside bodies, all in their own time. As ever, we are indebted to the Bouth Village Green Voluntary Committee, John Osborne and his colleagues, for their dedication and hard work in the up-keep of the Green and its playground.

Finally, at a time when many Parish Councils are struggling to find and keep their clerks, I would like to thank our own hard-working clerk who ensures we behave properly, handles the paperwork efficiently, and liaises diplomatically and effectively with the outside world. In addition to all that, she has also gained her CiLCA qualification this year, the product of hours of work in her own time. The Council has recently decided to apply for continuation of its Quality Parish status and the Clerk's qualifications are essential to this. Many thanks are due to Mandy from all of us.

Cllr Colin Barr
March 2011

Officers of the Council 2010-2011

West Ward: Cllr Colin Barr (Chair); Cllr Ian Cunliffe; Cllr Brenda Fishwick

East Ward: Cllr Chris Potts (Vice-chair); Cllr Ken Dean; Cllr John Taylor (resigned Sept 2010);
Cllr David Hoyle (co-opted Dec 2010)

Central Ward: Cllr Anne Robinson; Cllr John Watson; Cllr Penny Lovegrove (resigned May 2010);
Cllr Vanessa Champion (co-opted Sept 2010)

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Summary of Accounts 2010/2011

Balance brought forward	2713.89
RECEIPTS	
Annual Precept via SLDC	9475.00
CCC NF grant for Bouth playground repairs	1000.00
Bouth Village Green fund-raising for playground repairs	1000.00
Return of VAT	93.95
Share of CALC training course from neighbouring Councils	54.00
Total Income	14336.84
PAYMENTS - summary	
Insurance	467.38
Annual Fees for services:	
Audit Commission fee	141.00
Information Commissioner fee	35.00
CALC Subscription	188.50
Bouth Village Green & Playground:	
RoSPA H&S Annual Inspection	74.03
Playground surface repairs & drainage works	3243.01
Community Plan	
Printing (questionnaires)	28.50
Coordinator allowance	64.00
Oxen Park Cinema Club workshops for film competition	100.00
Food for Community Plan event, Finsthwaite Oct 10	64.00
Clerk's salary	4416.00
Clerk's office expenses & allowances	412.04
Clerk's travel expenses	155.80
Councillors' travel expenses	262.80
Training course and conference fees	90.00
Room hire	94.75
Refreshments for meetings	15.24
Newsletter publishing expenses	109.50
Website domain name renewal (2 years)	14.98
NALC - CiLCA qualification re-submission fee	55.00
Oxen Park phone box refurbishment	81.63
Poppy wreath for Remembrance Service	15.00
Finsthwaite Clock maintenance grant	150.00
NW Air Ambulance grant	50.00
Total Payments	10328.16
BALANCE	
Total income	14336.84
Total payments	10328.16
To Carry Forward	<u>4008.68</u>